

# HISTORY OF THE GNAT FALLS TRIP AS IT WAS MADE BY THE ANGELO HIKING CLUB

By AUGUST HILDEBRAND, Historian

Sunday, April 13th, 1924 was the day set for this trip. We were told to prepare for a rough trip—no hiking clothes, rough hiking shoes—to take enough food for two meals, and to assemble at the corner of Fifth and Exchange Streets at 6:00 o'clock A. M.

Promptly at this time and this place, in the grey of the morning, those who had no hiking clothes or ways on hand. We counted numbers and twenty one all told was the result. McCosky with his covered truck hitched and us all comfortably and comfortably seated on benches made of boards. We soon speeded toward the Eastern part of the City passing Tongue Point and the marshy lands. The weather was not any too clear but the air was rather bracing. Most of us had prepared for this and also for possible rain, so no ill effects were expected.

Looking East when we passed over the neck of Tongue Point we noticed a bright sunny sky in the direction of Eastern Oregon. This gave us hopes of good weather for the day.

Passing over and around the bend of Mill Creek, we were soon in the John Day farm lands. The hills of the meadows were, in full bloom and some farm gardens contained brightly colored daffodils. Everyone liked the daffodils. They were low and low; they are one of the early flowers which herald the coming of Spring. They grew easily and profusely in our climate and should be more extensively cultivated.

Lilies of the meadows are known in street language as Stunk Cabbage. They are also very bright and shade. Daffodils, Lilies of the Meadow and Scotch Broom are the three flowers that do much to give to our landscape that early spring up which gives an early Spring effect.

While I cannot advise the cultivation of the lilies of the meadows and the Scotch Broom, I can advise except under restrictions, let us all forget them as nuisances—yet we do captivate the eye. Like Peck's Bad Boy they have been planted in a scheme of things, and with all their faults, we do love to see them!

Passing over the John Day bridge we noticed a good many deer, some trotting and Columbia River fishing boats lying in harbor there. It gives us rather a secure feeling, lying on the placid, wind protected waters of this little strait. It has a small harbor and certainly has beautiful motifs for kodak pictures, painting, etc.

The farm homes situated at and near this river and on the Highway, some on projecting knolls, as though progenitors of future stone castles and mansions, and some further along overlooking the broad Columbia; give a dreamer a chance to vision a beautiful, enchanting country made by the beautiful views of the future. It is new, with only recent efforts made by man and with the many desirable building sites going to waste, so to speak, with the John Day background and the broad Columbia. I say before you—it is a beautiful picture.

Outside Village, lying easily on an extension of land overlooking all should be mentioned, it is the home place of fisherman and small farmers, a neat little place. Here was soon passed, also the cross roads at Svensen. In time too we passed the Union High School No. 2 to our left. This is the new building and speaks well the newness and spirit of the farming communities of Svensen and Knappa.

Passing under a logging railroad we passed over a track near Knappa, at a few more turns of the road passing the Knappa settlement, then over Rock Creek—and just at the straight ending of road we were halted. We dismounted and went straight in a Westerly direction and soon found ourselves on an abandoned logging road. Here we saw and counted numbers again, also introduced ourselves. We were twenty one all told and the following were prepared to make the trip: Charles Johnson, Miss Mrs. Emil Grandlund, Charles Hustwick, A. Rannick, August Hildebrand, Lavern Shatto, William Plac, Elmo Sals, Marshall Johnson, Miss Mrs. H. H. Grandlund, George Gamble, Miss Peterson, Coral Snell, R. McGavin, R. D. Ingram, Ida Mallin and Alii Luu.

We started single file, the chief guide, Emil Grandlund, leading, Mrs. Grandlund acting as hiking chaperone, with Charles Johnson as rear guard. We were in easy stages. The weather was cool, but after about a half mile of hiking we were warmed up enough to discard our heavy overclothing, especially as we looked as if we were walking in a fair to good wind. All unnecessary baggage was placed under a convenient stump protected from possible rain.

The logging road led gradually and steadily up hill. This was good hiking as the road bed had been made of

coarse sand. Here and there young trees and fallen dead trees obstructed the way. It was hard to find any great disadvantages. Presently the guide led us to the right through a logged off and partly burned over part of the forest, the trail being somewhat more difficult and the trail was steeper. However it turned out to be a short cut so distance was saved.

On this stretch of the trail we saw the first wild mountain flowers, in particular a small yellow one of the color and size of a butter cup but in the shape of a pansy. Many Oregonians was just starting to bloom, also wild bleeding hearts, Lily of the Valley, red wild currant blossom, and of course the ever present salmon berry blossom.

Steadily we went up hill, continually over old logging railroad grades. The road was more rocky, and the rocks were of a some kind, indicating volcanic origin. After traveling about two hours up we turned to the left down in a gulch and found ourselves in green timber Creek.

Up to this time we had traveled with no variation through logged off and burned over land. This land was not so much very accomplished green woods have. However the distant Washington hills and distant Columbia River below us compensated for the lack of green woods.

Arriving at the bottom of the canyon in the thick underbrush of the green timber, the first sight of the creek was a small stream, (reg. A heavy windstorm last winter had felled a great many trees, throwing them across the creek. We closed in a gulch and found ourselves in close touch to each other while traveling through this conglomeration of underbrush and trees. We

crossed the creek and went on to the left side of the canyon, where the Creek cascaded over boulders forming small waterfalls. Presently the Chief Guide announced that we had reached the top of the trail, 125 feet high and very beautiful. We started a campfire, brewed the coffee, and cleared the place of some underbrush. The gorge is very narrow, and while we had plenty of room, the walls of the canyon come close to the walls of the canyon. The underbrush consisted of salmon berry, Oregon grape, wild currant bush, Devil's Cane, ferns and moss.

While we were preparing to dismount it started to darken in the sky directly above us—we had no horizontal view. A few drops of rain fell on our heads. We felt gloomy and to add to our discomfort it started to hail. Then someone who perhaps had attended Barnes Psychology class, started to talk about the Gang's all Here. What the Heck to we care! This seemingly had the right effect as we all felt more cheerful and the rain stopped!

After lunch we packed our belongings up and scaled the rocky mountain toward the top of the Falls in a very short time we beheld them before us: one of about the same general size as the first. The official photographer and others who had their kodaks along were busy all this time taking pictures. These first two Falls were of about the same shape and size as the second. The trail to the Columbia River was, perhaps not quite as much water.

On we went, climbing up, hanging on to salmon berry bushes, ferns, etc. and once in a while making the mistake of stepping on a Devil's walking cane bush. Devil's walking cane is rightly named, being of the thickness of a cane, 6" to 10" tall, with large round leaves and a Devil's walking cane stem is covered with pointed, very sharp, prickly stickers that break and stick in the fleshy part of one's hands and fingers. You think of the stickiness of the cane, and how lucky enough to grab one, even though you received your education in Sunday School.

We soon beheld Falls Number Three before us. These Falls form narrow waterfalls. The first two were about one mile apart, the regular shape, but number three had a straight fall down, somewhat like a waterfall. It flows over a shelf, the projection and falls are perfectly alike and it is entirely safe to walk under the falls. It has also a grassy or mossy green background and the rock shield is white, contrasting with other colors. The height I should judge is about 120 feet, width on top about 10 feet, and below, on account of the spray spreading about 15 feet wide.

We crossed the Creek, over rocks, boulders logs and rubbed the right side of the gorge which was not quite so steep and rocky, and went to the top of the horse tail falls. Some of the bunch enjoyed rolling boulders down the face of the sound of the dropping boulders. It took 3 1/2 seconds from the drop until the bottom of the sound. Will someone figure out the sound of the sound of the falls correctly?

While we were standing on top of these falls we beheld a little above us, the Falls Number Four. These were of another shape, being about 20 feet wide and not so high as Number Three. The water here falls over a ledge, even about like the mane of a horse.

This is as far as we went. Above these last falls there is supposed to be a sort of table land with a number of about the same size as these several miles farther up. It is claimed that this country was a great gathering place for Elk. It is called the Elk's table land. The grassy in places over the tress.

These four falls that we had explored are connected with lesser falls. Each made the boulder field. Each fall is of different shape and each has a beauty of its own. All combined make a pleasing effect in the green virgin timber. Logging is going on within a half mile of the North.

The distance from where the Creek starts to cascade to the top of the falls is about a mile and a half. The total height must be between 500' to 700'. The distance from the Columbia River Highway to the top of the falls is about 1 1/2 miles. The water is about two-thirds or three-fourths that of young's River Falls, which is known to most Astorians. The panorama effect is more than four times that of these falls.

From the upper Falls we wended our way in a Northerly direction. We went over a different route home, the Chief Guide leading and the rear guard, blazing the trail for future use. We soon struck the logged-off land and hiked the steep, steep, and went down a very steep, long and straight log chute. This was easy traveling, in fact, too easy and fast. This was attended by the fact that two members of the party literally and actually sat down involuntarily and let nature take its course—downward of course. Previous to the one of the party had a wild cat mimicked a wild cat in its gestures and cry on one of the upturned leaning trees, to the amusement of the crowd.

Arriving at the bottom of the gulch we had to travel up again in a straight direction and soon struck the abandoned railroad grade. After some time we were on a trail. We traveled in the morning, having completed a circle in our travels. We now passed a rock cut or quarry on the way. Some of the return, some of our party amused themselves by rolling boulders down the gulch. They did double antics—they widened the trail and filled the low places, perhaps!

From where we struck the railroad grade to the Columbia River highway the trail goes winding down as a very gulch. Some of the trees are of some small pine, cedar trees and Oregon grape plants to plant in more convenient places.

The view toward the State of Washington is beautiful. While there was somewhat cloud, Tongue Point, Crays Bay, Cathlamet Bay, the Columbia River with the steamers plying up and down, Altona, Brookings, Skomokwa, etc., could all be seen.

The Chief Guide sent two men, Marshall Johnson and William Plac ahead to the meeting place on the Highway to fetch water for the coffee kettle and to start a fire. It had been decided that during the time we were to wait for the auto truck to take us to Astoria we were to go on a short hiking trip. There were some steep grades and taking advantage of some short cuts through the brush so as to avoid the long windings of the road we soon espied the Columbia River below.

Fire had been started O. K. and was burning bright and cheerily, but the water fire was as yet hunting

for water in the jungle. Ordinarily in the Western Oregon country, obtaining water is no worry, but it seems that the party got lost in the "boas" wrong direction, traveling alongside the Creek but not crossing it. The dense underbrush prevented him from seeing the trail to the "boas" to do it; after the return of the water-finder with an empty kettle, it took the Chief Guide just about two minutes to find the trail and bring back a plentiful supply.

The sun was shining and every one was waiting for the coffee to brew, when toward the direction of Astoria, that is, toward the Northwest, rain clouds gathered, and to our dismay, they traveled toward us. It soon commenced to sprinkle; the North wind was somewhat cold too. Autos were traveling past us in both directions. While we were no longer in the wilderness we did not feel any too comfortable and started to huddle together and covered ourselves as best we could to protect us from the downpour of rain. All of a sudden someone in the crowd started to run up the Highway toward us. It was a welcome sight and dispelled our gloom. The side curtains were placed open, and the crowd of people, many lunched in the truck under cover. We all felt again "What in Heck do we care now!" One of our party, who was a picnicer, picked up a friend and was also speeding homeward bound.

Without any hurry we finished lunch, extinguished the fire and were soon on our way toward Astoria. While the truck had side curtains on the front "on both sides of the driver's car" was open, and the North wind, blowing through the curtains, through these gaps, Charles Hustwick and Charles Johnson, was on each side, acted as windshields against the wind. The truck was a table riding. McCloskey is a good chauffeur. The rain was coming down occasionally, and the windings of the highway and were negotiated in good order.

The gang was singing all the songs that were ever printed or sung, from the fashionable "Merry We Roll Along," "Ruben, Ruben, Ruben," "Thinking," "Old Black Joe," to the Oregon State song etc. It was a singing school entertainment accompanied with orchestra. The orchestra was furnished by Miss Patterson. She played on a sort of tin whistle which had the sound of a square shawm, bag pipe, etc. She made noise enough. The band effect was somewhat disturbing at times or pleasing at other times just as she got the response out of the instrument, whether mischievous or inspiring.

We soon rounded the neck of Tongue Point and heading in a Westerly direction soon espied Astoria. We were now headed to a sunset in rainstorm over the mouth of the Columbia, which is a rather uncommon sight. Either the sunset is obscured by the rain or the rain is so dense, streaky dark sheets of rain alternated the red.

Sixteenth street was the first stop where several got off, and also yours truly. The rain was very heavy. By the historian that everyone had a pleasant smile and was happy when left. In spite of rain, it is always good to get to Astoria. A bunch. And thus ended another August day.

It is my hope and wish that the owners of this land be public spirited and donate either to the County of Clatsop or to the City of Astoria for the public use and good enough land to make a reasonable sized park at these waterfalls, to preserve the immediate timber so that the original beauty of the mountains and the Astoria over some of the abandoned logging railroads, the right of way to this bit of mountain scenery. It is suggested that in the example of Sutor Heights, the names of the Bradley Park the names of the donors may be preserved and honored. It is also suggested that the Astoria Hiking Club, in its own discretion, take the proper steps to acquaint the owners of this land of this.

There is also an economic question involved. If the falls are to be saved from the falls—in fact it will enhance the value and beauty. In course of time this water as well as the water of the falls may be more valuable than the water of the falls. This however has no present monetary value—it is only so, as projected and improved.

Respectfully submitted,  
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